

# **STRENGTHENING BOSTON'S WORKFORCE**

**A REPORT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD JOBS TRUST'S  
"FIRST STEP" JOB TRAINING PROGRAM**



“ I am committed to giving our residents the skills they need. We have to work together so our economy continues to grow. We can all be proud of that legacy. Tonight, I am proud to announce that we will invest an additional \$1 million so that Boston residents can get the training they need for the jobs that are in demand. ”

Mayor Thomas M. Menino  
State of City Speech  
January 9, 2001

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In January 2001, at Mayor Menino's direction, the City of Boston's Neighborhood Jobs Trust (NJT) embarked on its largest ever investment of linkage dollars for occupational skills training. Three years and \$3 million later, 781 Bostonians have received high-quality education and training from 18 community-based organizations.

Below are the highlights from the "First Step" initiative, a program announced as the local and national economy peaked, which went on to successfully train and place several hundred low- to moderate income Boston residents through one of the region's deepest recessions.

## ABOUT THE 782 PARTICIPANTS:

- They ranged in age from 18 to 67; the median age was 34
- Reflecting Boston's growing diversity, 53% were African American, 21% Latino, 14% Asian and 11 % Caucasian
- At the time of enrollment, 68% had a high school diploma or a GED, 6% had not completed high school, another 15% had some post-secondary education, 8% had college degrees (half from foreign universities)
- New Bostonians enrolled in record numbers: 51% of all participants were non-native-English speakers
- 12% were receiving welfare benefits, and another 12% were receiving food stamps
- Participants resided in every Boston neighborhood, particularly those areas with the lowest family incomes and highest unemployment
- 30% were employed in low-wage or part-time jobs when they entered their training program

## TYPES OF TRAINING PROVIDED:

- Health Careers
- Office Skills
- Culinary Arts/Hospitality
- Construction Trades
- Skills upgrading for entry-level employees working in the Longwood Medical Area

## JOB PLACEMENTS:

- 64% have been placed in new jobs to date
- 66% of the jobs have medical benefits attached
- 225 employers hired "First Step" graduates, and 22 of them hired 4 or more participants
- The average wage was \$11.08 per hour (above Boston's 2004 Living Wage of \$10.96)
- Culinary Arts/Hospitality wages averaged \$9.39 - \$9.99
- Office support wages averaged \$11.37 to \$11.70
- Health care averaged \$11.87
- Building Trades averaged \$13.31

# BACKGROUND

“ I BELIEVE in the people of Boston. If we give them the tools they need to compete in the city's knowledge-based economy, they will rebuild our economy. We have invested a lot in work-force development over the past ten years and it is our responsibility to continue to support our workforce at a time when they need it most.”  
Mayor Thomas M. Menino

As Mayor Menino announced the City's **\$1 MILLION INVESTMENT IN JOB TRAINING** in his State of the City speech in January 2001, Boston had enjoyed nearly a decade of unprecedented economic expansion resulting in an **UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF ONLY 2.6%**, and labor shortages in some industries. Even with these positive economic indicators, however, many Boston residents faced a significant skill gap keeping them from the well-paying available jobs.

The “First Step” program, funded from the Neighborhood Jobs Trust (NJT), was designed to raise the skills and literacy levels of participants through training courses created with the input of Boston employers to ensure graduates were receiving up-to-date instruction meeting industry standards. To match the need of Boston employers, courses were offered in:

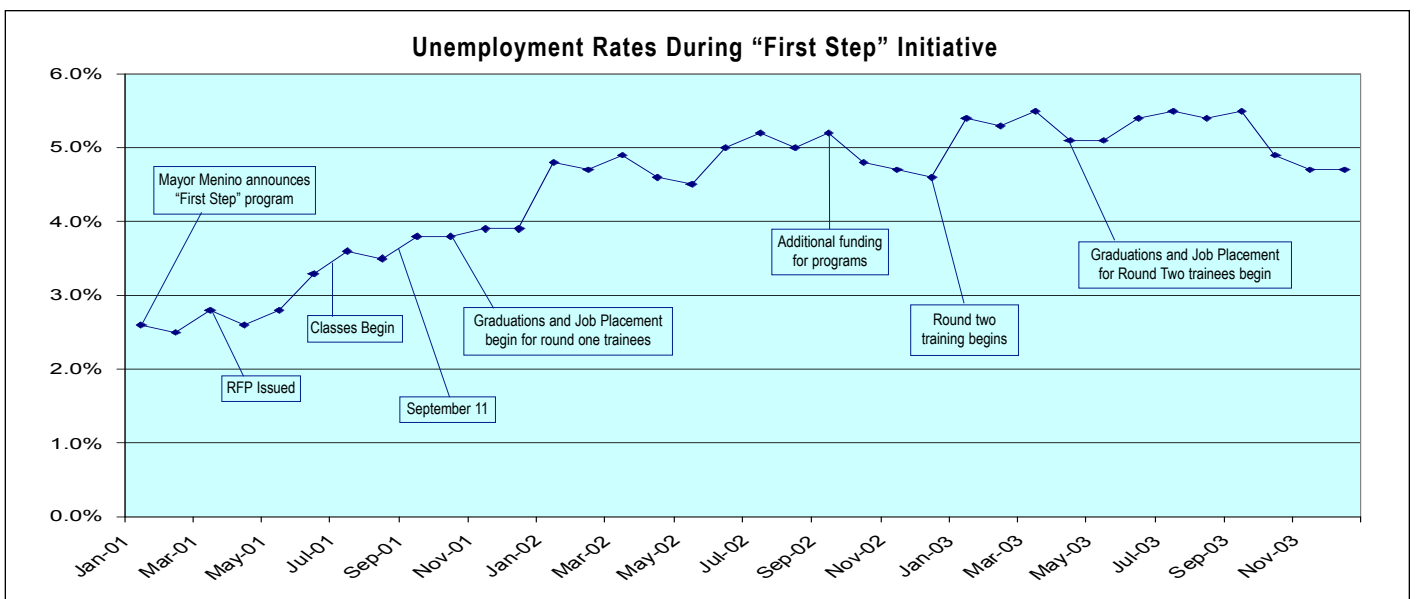
- HEALTH CAREERS
- CULINARY ARTS AND HOSPITALITY
- OFFICE SKILLS
- CONSTRUCTION TRADES

By Spring 2001, however, the economy had begun to soften; many businesses stopped hiring and in some cases had to lay off current staff, creating stiff competition for every job opening. As classes began in **AUGUST 2001, THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAD ALREADY RISEN TO 3.5%**. With the downswing in the economy,

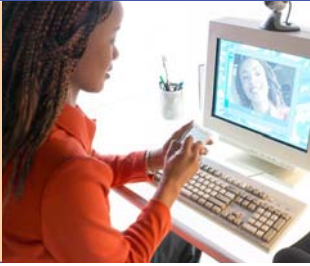
Mayor Menino asked the Neighborhood Jobs Trust to increase the program so more residents could access the training. In **JUNE 2001 THE JOBS TRUST AWARDED 18 COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCIES A TOTAL OF \$1.7 MILLION** for skills training.

The initial \$1.7 million investment, which enrolled 410 Bostonians, was so successful in training and placing participants the NJT, with urging from the Mayor, **INVESTED ANOTHER \$1.2 MILLION**. The second round of funding began in January 2003, enabling **ANOTHER 371 RESIDENTS** access to training and job placement services. This new funding was particularly needed as the federal government was decreasing its national job training funds and entry level workers were now competing against experienced unemployed workers who were not able to find re-employment at similar wages and levels of their previous jobs. By **JANUARY 2003, UNEMPLOYMENT HAD HIT 5.4%** in Boston.

The Bostonians who receive these skills training services are not, however, the Neighborhood Jobs Trust's only beneficiaries. Successfully increasing the number of Bostonians equipped with skills that are in demand drives the growth of Boston's business community and contributes to the robustness of the overall economy.



# A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LINKAGE



The Neighborhood Jobs Trust, along with the Neighborhood Housing Trust, is funded by real estate development, via Boston's linkage program. This program was established in the mid-1980s to ensure that Boston's real estate development would benefit the city's neighborhood residents. In 1996, by action of the Boston Zoning Commission, linkage was incorporated into Article 80B of the Boston Zoning Code. Today's linkage program requires developers to pay into the Neighborhood Jobs Trust \$1.44 for each square foot of development in excess of 100,000 square feet.

Three trustees appointed by the Mayor oversee the Neighborhood Jobs Trust. City Councilor Paul Scapicchio, First Assistant Collector-Treasurer Vivian Leo, and Director of Jobs and Community Services Conny Doty, in their role as trustees, authorized the expenditure of funds for the "First Step" initiative. The Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS), a division of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, administered the grants. As the City's workforce development agency, JCS awards funds to qualified third-party training programs, which in turn provide skills training to low and moderate income residents of Boston.



## Success Story: Merlyn B.

When she lost her job due to Polaroid's shut down in 2002, Merlyn, a Mattapan resident, had to take stock of what she was going to do next.

She had enjoyed working on housing reconstruction in her home country of Guyana a few years earlier and decided to seek a career in the skilled trades where she could "use my hands and my mind."

Merlyn visited Women in the Building Trades (WIBT) and entered their Step to Success program. She proved herself to be a terrific student - she was a very hard worker who was always interested in learning new skills.

While still in the program, she was placed at Byggmeister Associates, a contractor specializing in high-end remodeling with a strong commitment to the professional skill development of its employees. Working full time, she continued her classes at WIBT during the evenings and on weekends and graduated with her class.

Merlyn has already received a raise and her job benefits include medical insurance and a 401K plan. Merlyn hasn't stopped learning, either. She has taken a roof-framing course at Wentworth Institute with funding provided by her employer.



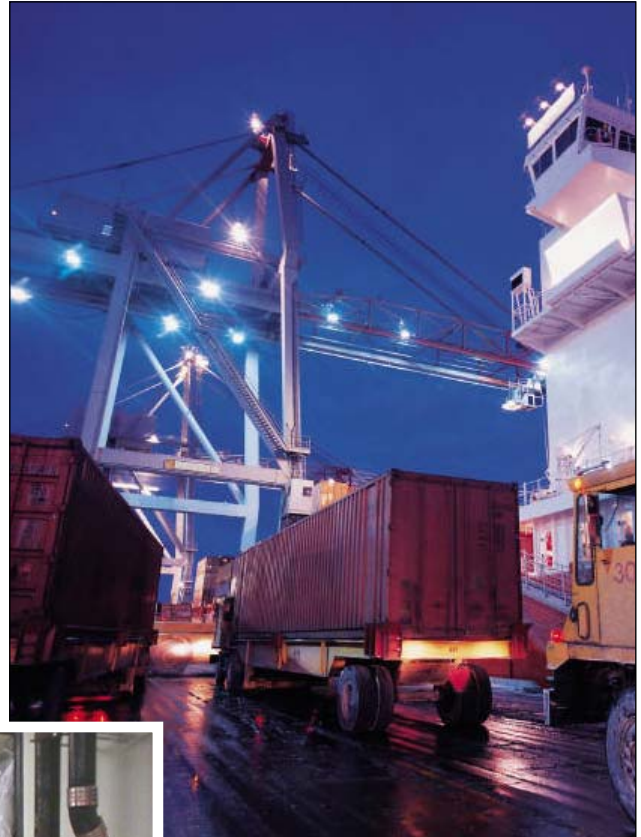
# THE COMMITMENT AND DELIVERY OF FUNDS FOR “FIRST STEP”

“Our students were overwhelmingly single mothers living in poverty with the added burden of severe educational deficits. But despite these and other obstacles, many have gone on to achieve full-time employment. As a service provider, I am inspired by the students. As an employer, I am impressed with the very tangible results.”

Judy Beckler, President  
St. Mary's Women and Children's Center

Following Mayor Menino's announcement at the 2001 State of the City address, the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services designed a Request For Proposals (RFP) calling for occupational skills training programs aimed at entry level workers. Issued several weeks later, this RFP called for a focus on the needs of Boston employers, increasing the likelihood trainees would find training-related positions. To further increase the probability of achieving as many job placements as possible, the RFP indicated contracts would be performance-based. Providers would receive the first payment for each enrollee (up to a certain number), then a second payment contingent on the enrollee's being placed in a job.

The “First Step” Skills Training RFP attracted many suitable proposals for training programs. Recognizing the opportunity to achieve results exceeding initial goals, Mayor Menino increased the allocation to \$1.7 million. With this money, JCS funded programs at 18 different community-based training organizations. Enrollment in training programs began in August of 2001. Occupational fields included: Allied Health; Medical Billing; Office Support; Culinary Arts and Hospitality; and Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Training. The average length of training was 16 weeks.





## Success Story: Deborah B.

In early 2001, Roxbury resident Deborah B. was laid off from a local non-profit agency. With a long work history, and nearing the traditional retirement age, Deborah needed to find a new job.

The skills she had learned in her own family had qualified her to work in human service settings providing support to children and modeling parenting skills. Still, her lack of computer skills and the economic downturn at the onset of the 21st century made finding a job very difficult.

At Operation A.B.L.E., which provides services particularly to older workers, Deborah found a 19-week training program that would teach her those much-needed skills.

Aware this commitment to training would "make me more marketable and give me another skill to rely on," Deborah enrolled and faithfully attended weekly job search support groups at A.B.L.E.

After a two-month job search, she accepted an offer from the American Student Association as a Dispute Analyst, a position she has held for almost two years.

The data from these 18 programs clearly demonstrate the \$1.7 million of Neighborhood Jobs Trust investment successfully reached the program's target populations, including residents living below the poverty line, unemployed workers, those with low educational attainment, and non-native-English speakers. Furthermore, 58% of the training recipients found jobs within the allowed time frame, and to date 64% of the trainees have now found employment. This number is especially impressive given the difficult job market in 2002, when participants were completing training.

Due to the effectiveness of the programs and the strength of the results, Mayor Menino allocated an additional \$1.2 million to fund a second round of training services, based on the same RFP. With this money, JCS re-funded 15 of the programs. The enrollments for the second round of funding are complete, with 371 residents participating in training programs provided by 15 organizations. As of the writing of this report, however, some enrollees are still in training, and so the data regarding job placement numbers are incomplete. Partial data do indicate that again the services funded did reach the target populations, and job placement numbers are strong.



# THE PROGRAMS

The “First Step” skills training initiative offered a mix of programs to prepare residents for employment in professions highly represented in Boston’s labor market, while also offering quality entry-level jobs, i.e., full-time jobs with one or more benefit.

## **ACTION FOR BOSTON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INC. (ABCD)**

178 Tremont Street, Downtown Boston

- Computerized office skills for English Speakers of Other Languages
- Child care assistant training (2nd round only)

## **ALLSTON BRIGHTON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

15 North Beacon Street, Allston

- Computerized office skills evening program

## **AMERICAN RED CROSS OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY**

285 Columbus Avenue, South End

- Certified health care assistant program

## **ASIAN AMERICAN CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

200 Tremont Street, Chinatown

- Computerized office skills for English Speakers of Other Languages

## **BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

250 New Rutherford Avenue, Charlestown

- Allied health certificate program for phlebotomy, medical care assistant and patient care assistant

## **CRITTENTON HASTINGS HOUSE**

10 Perthshire Road, Brighton

- Culinary arts skills training

## **DIMOCK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER**

55 Dimock Street, Roxbury

- Training in a choice of medical billing, direct support counseling, medical assistance, or certified nursing assistant

## **FEDERATED DORCHESTER NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES**

4 Drydock Avenue, South Boston

- Big Dig Diner culinary arts training

## **FENWAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

73 Hemenway Street, Fenway

- Administrative and customer services training for health care and health insurance sector

## **INQUILINOS BORICUAS EN ACCION**

405 Shawmut Avenue, South End

- CISCO networking academy program

## **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BOSTON**

One Milk Street, Downtown Boston

- Hospitality training program for hotel industry

## **JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE**

29 Winter Street & Malcolm X Boulevard, Downtown and Roxbury

- Culinary arts combined with vocational English





### **JOBS FOR YOUTH**

125 Tremont Street, Downtown Boston

- Financial services and computerized office skills

### **ONE WITH ONE, INC.**

77 Warren Street, Brighton

- Computerized office skills with English for Speakers of Other Languages

### **OPERATION A.B.L.E. OF GREATER BOSTON**

131 Tremont Street, Downtown Boston

- Computerized office skills and customer service training

### **ST. MARY'S WOMEN AND INFANTS CENTER**

90 Cushing Avenue, Dorchester

- Computerized office skills, customer service, and medical terminology

### **VETERANS BENEFITS CLEARINGHOUSE**

38 Dudley Street, Roxbury

- Medical assistant and phlebotomy training combined with computerized office skills

### **WOMEN IN THE BUILDING TRADES/BOSTON TRADESWOMEN'S NETWORK**

12 Southern Avenue, Dorchester

- Pre-apprenticeship training in a wide range of trades



## **Health Care & Research Training Institute**

In addition to funding the "First Step" skills training model, Neighborhood Jobs Trust funds were used to support a multi-faceted pilot training initiative, the Health Care and Research Training Institute, operated by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and the Fenway Community Development Corporation.

Funding helped support pre-employment training and incumbent worker training. Once hired into entry-level jobs, motivated employees are invited to participate in a mix of at least ten education and training classes through the Training Institute. Different from the traditional skills training model, this program was designed initially to address the critical labor shortages in the health care sector by allowing employers to fill vacancies with skilled staff and increase job retention. The Institute focuses on three career pathways: patient care, technical/technician, and administrative managerial. The Institute works with major employers in the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMAA).

In the past two years, the Institute has trained 500 employees. Retention of employees trained through the Institute exceeds 90%, and over half have received merit wage increases, an indicator of increased performance on the job.

Early funding from the Neighborhood Jobs Trust contributed to the growth and development of the Health Care and Research Training Institute. More recently, the initiative was awarded a \$1 million, three-year grant to expand and enhance its career ladder model. Funding originated with the **SKILLWORKS** initiative, a coalition of Boston and national private funders and public resources including the City of Boston's Neighborhood Jobs Trust.

# WHO BENEFITED?

## **GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION**

When linkage was originated in the 1980s it was with a vision that downtown development would also benefit the outlying neighborhoods of Boston. “First Step” made that aspiration a reality: every neighborhood had residents who accessed training. In neighborhoods associated with higher incomes, the Bostonians enrolled were generally from subsidized housing developments, while in other neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty, unemployment and lower educational attainment, sizeable numbers of residents took the opportunity to better prepare themselves to gain higher wage employment.

Dorchester, the city's largest neighborhood, with 15% of Boston's population, accounted for 22% of all participants. It should be noted only a very small portion of Dorchester is located within the city's designated “Empowerment Zone”, thus most of its residents were unable to access the considerable federal investment made in the Zone for a variety of education and training programs. With similar poverty indicators as Zone neighborhoods, it was clear there was a pent up demand for more access to skills training in the parts of Dorchester not in the Empowerment Zone.

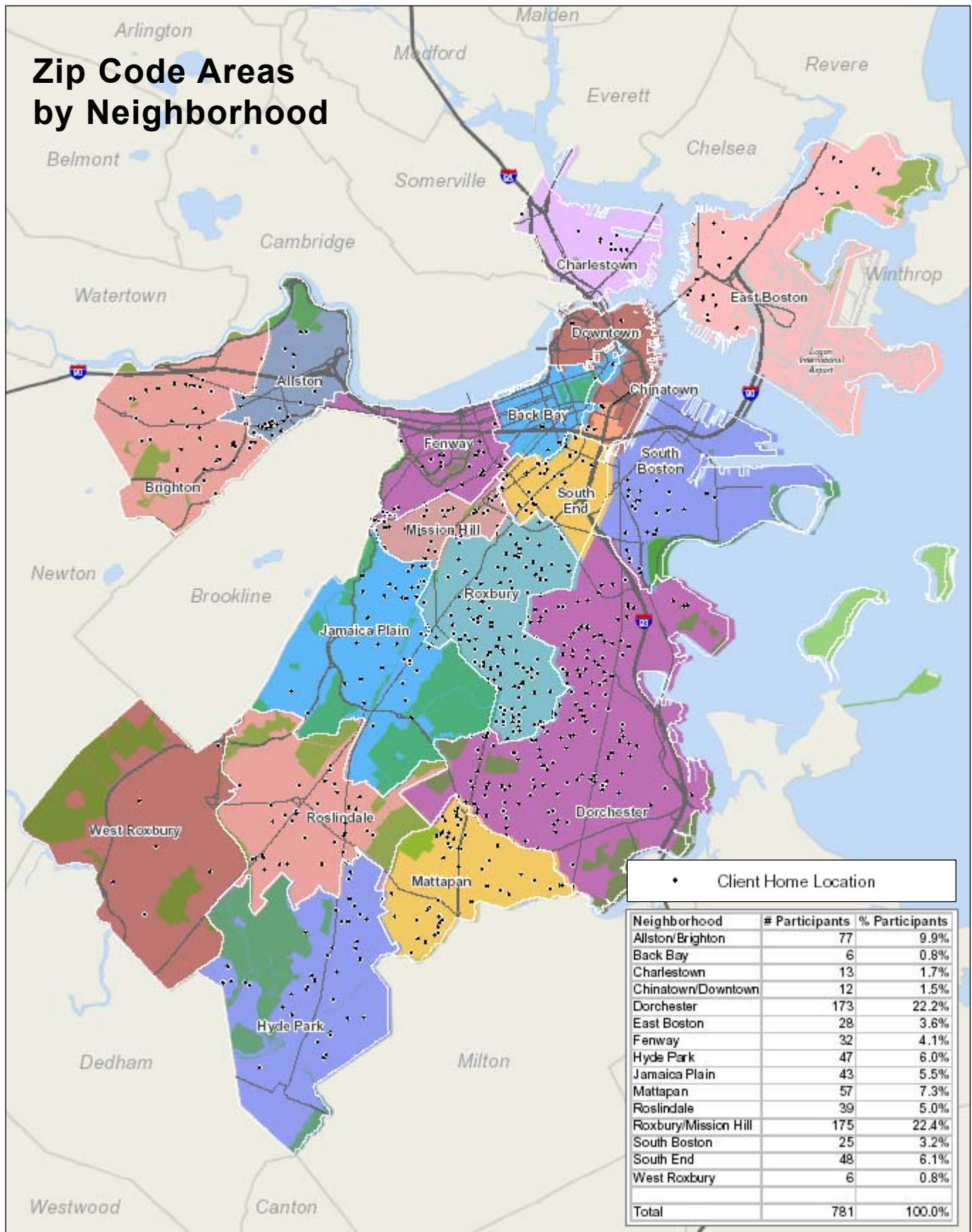
Roxbury and Mission Hill, with nearly 10% of Boston's population, also accounted for 22% of participants. Allston-Brighton had 10% of the enrollees and is 12% of the city's population. Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park and the South End each had between 7% and 6% of the participants.

Using detailed information from the 2000 Census, we can show a significant match between areas of high poverty/unemployment, low income/educational attainment, and where participants lived. It was to these neighborhoods and residents this program was directed. The maps on pages 9, 10, 11, and 13 provide the visual proof.

Sixty percent (60%) of “First Step” participants reside in census tracts where the poverty rate is higher than the city's average, which was 19.5% (see map on page 10). Boston's median household income taken from the 2000 Census was \$39,629, well over 50% of the participants live in areas well below the average income.

Expectedly, participants also came from areas of high unemployment; 56% lived in neighborhood areas where the unemployment rate exceeded the city's 7.2% rate in the year 2000 (see map on page 11). Boston's knowledge based economy is reliant on a well-educated workforce, so there is a direct correlation between educational attainment with access to and retention of jobs. The map on page 13 shows significant numbers of “First Step” participants live in areas with large numbers of high school dropouts. Though 68% of “First Step” trainees had a high school credential, (many from non-USA schools) they were still struggling with low income and high unemployment.

## Zip Code Areas by Neighborhood



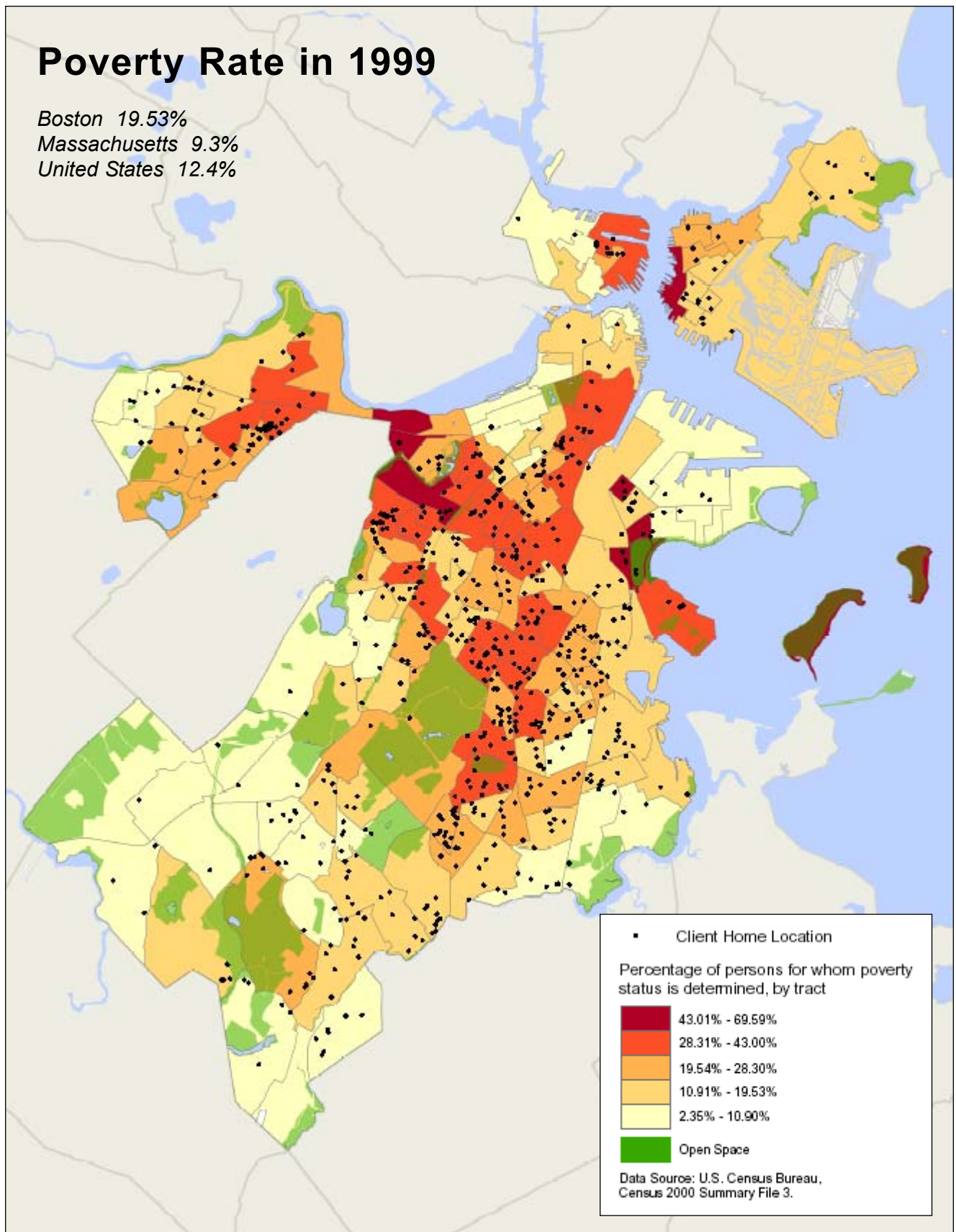


## Poverty Rate in 1999

*Boston* 19.53%

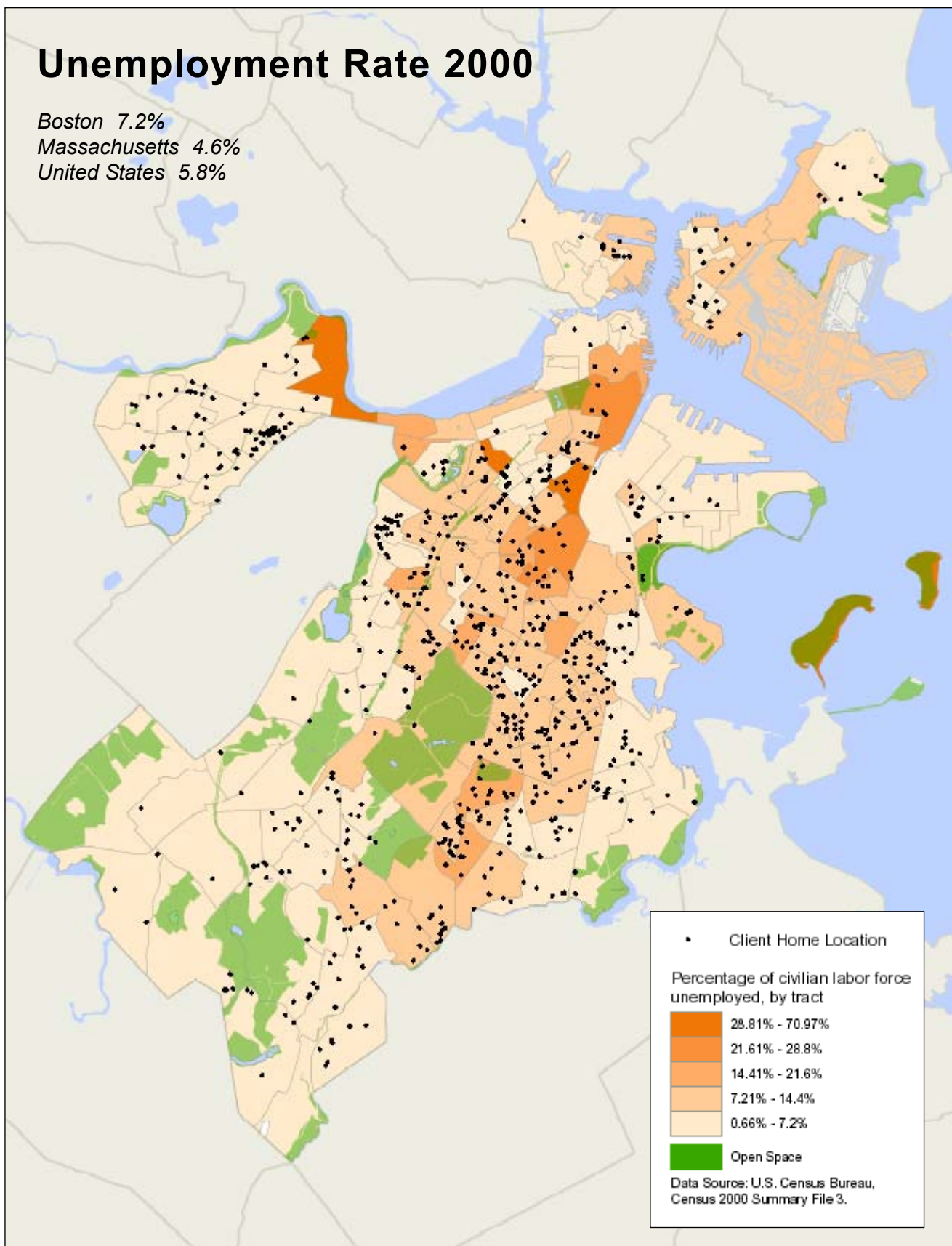
*Massachusetts* 9.3%

*United States* 12.4%



# Unemployment Rate 2000

*Boston* 7.2%  
*Massachusetts* 4.6%  
*United States* 5.8%



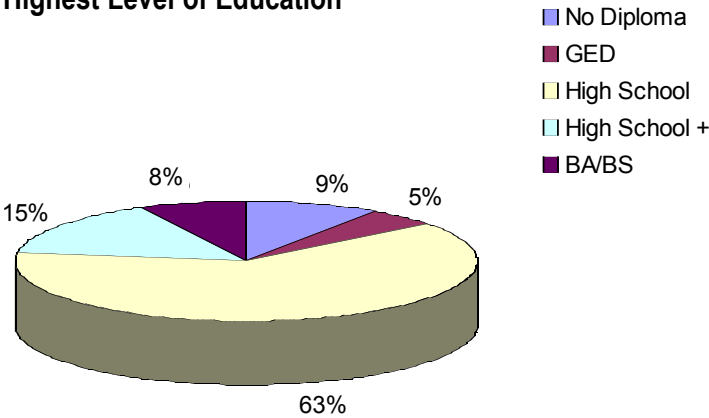


# WHO BENEFITED?

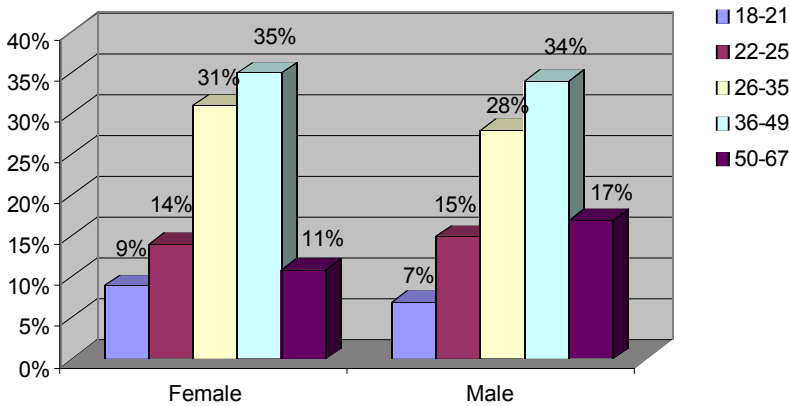
## GENDER, AGE, AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

The majority of the 781 participants (81%) were women, ranging in age from 18 to 67, with a median age of 34. Sixty-five percent of the participants were between 26 and 49. Nine percent (9%) had less than a high school education. Sixty-eight (68%) percent of the group had attained a high school diploma or GED. Fifteen percent had some education beyond high school, but less than a bachelor's degree. Of the 8% with a BA degree or higher, over half had a degree from a foreign country.

Highest Level of Education

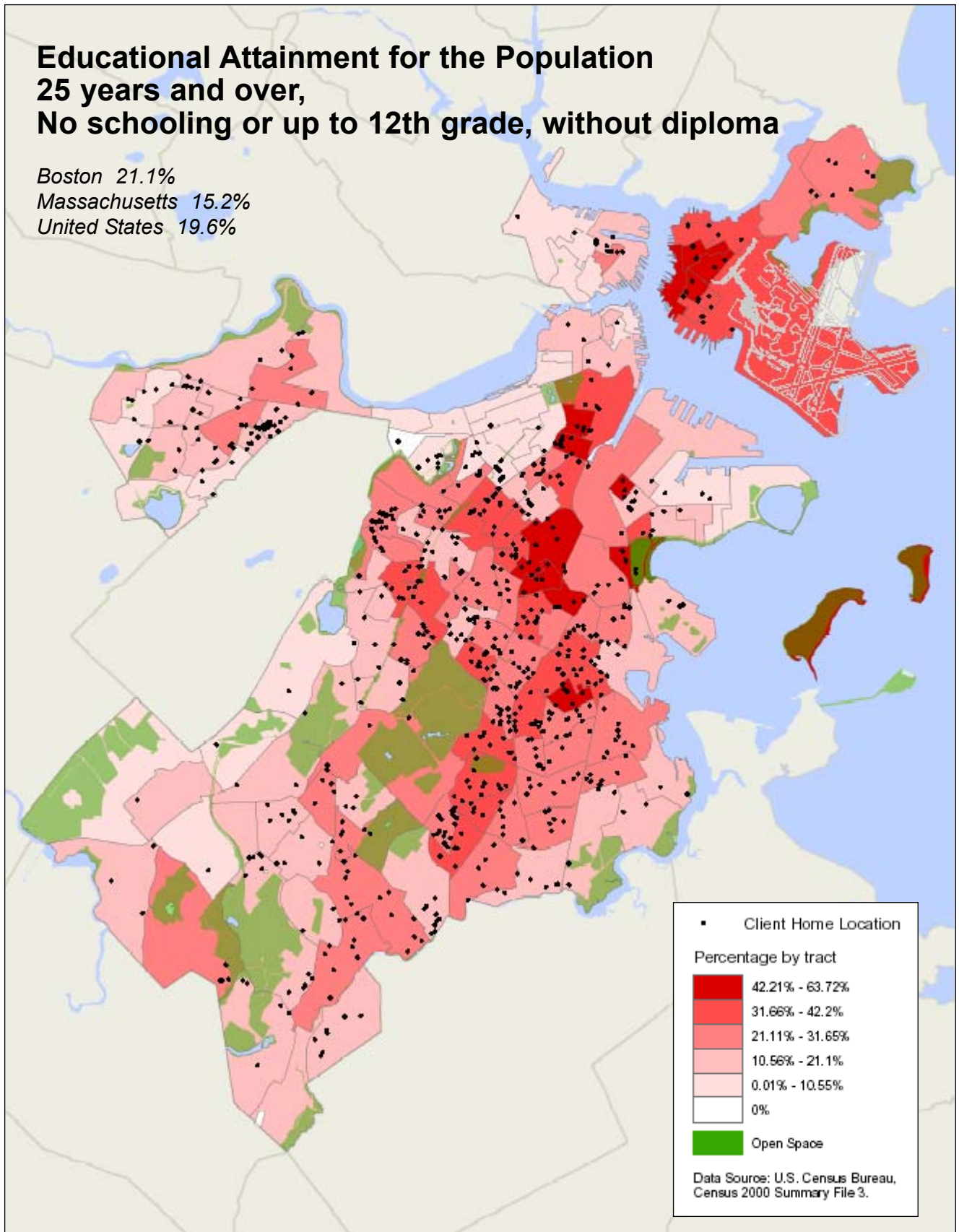


Age & Gender



## Educational Attainment for the Population 25 years and over, No schooling or up to 12th grade, without diploma

*Boston* 21.1%  
*Massachusetts* 15.2%  
*United States* 19.6%

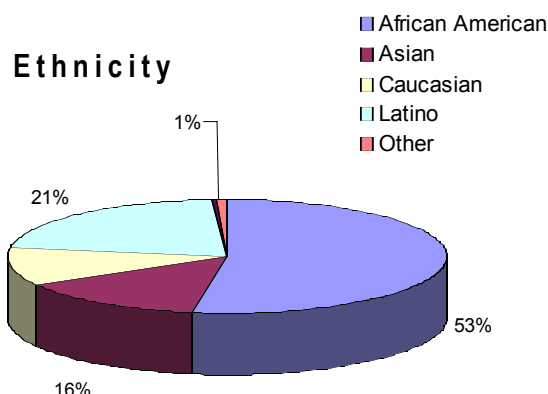


# WHO BENEFITED?

## RACE, ETHNICITY, AND NATIVE LANGUAGE

Ethnicity and native language showed stunning diversity. The trainees identified nearly 30 different nationalities and over 20 languages. The largest racial/ethnic group was African American (53%), which included immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa. Next was Latino (21%), then Asian (14%), and Caucasian (11%), which included immigrants from Eastern Europe.

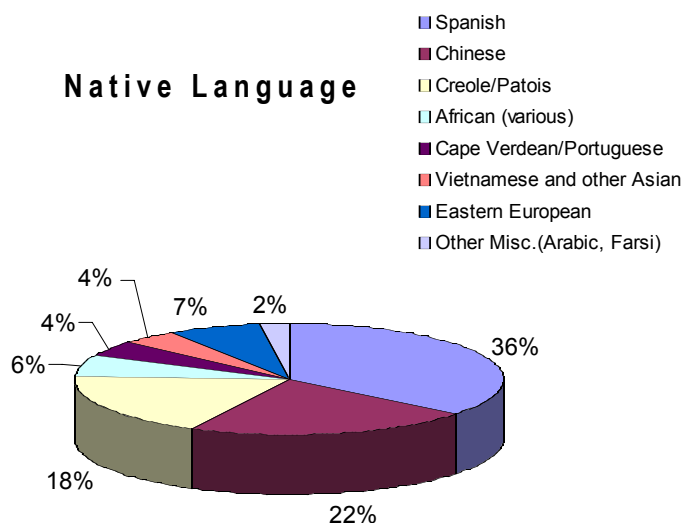
Over one half of the participants (51%) were non-native-English speakers. Of the non-native-English speakers, 36% indicated Spanish as their native language and 22% indicated Chinese. Other languages represented included Creole, Vietnamese, various African and Eastern European languages, and Arabic.



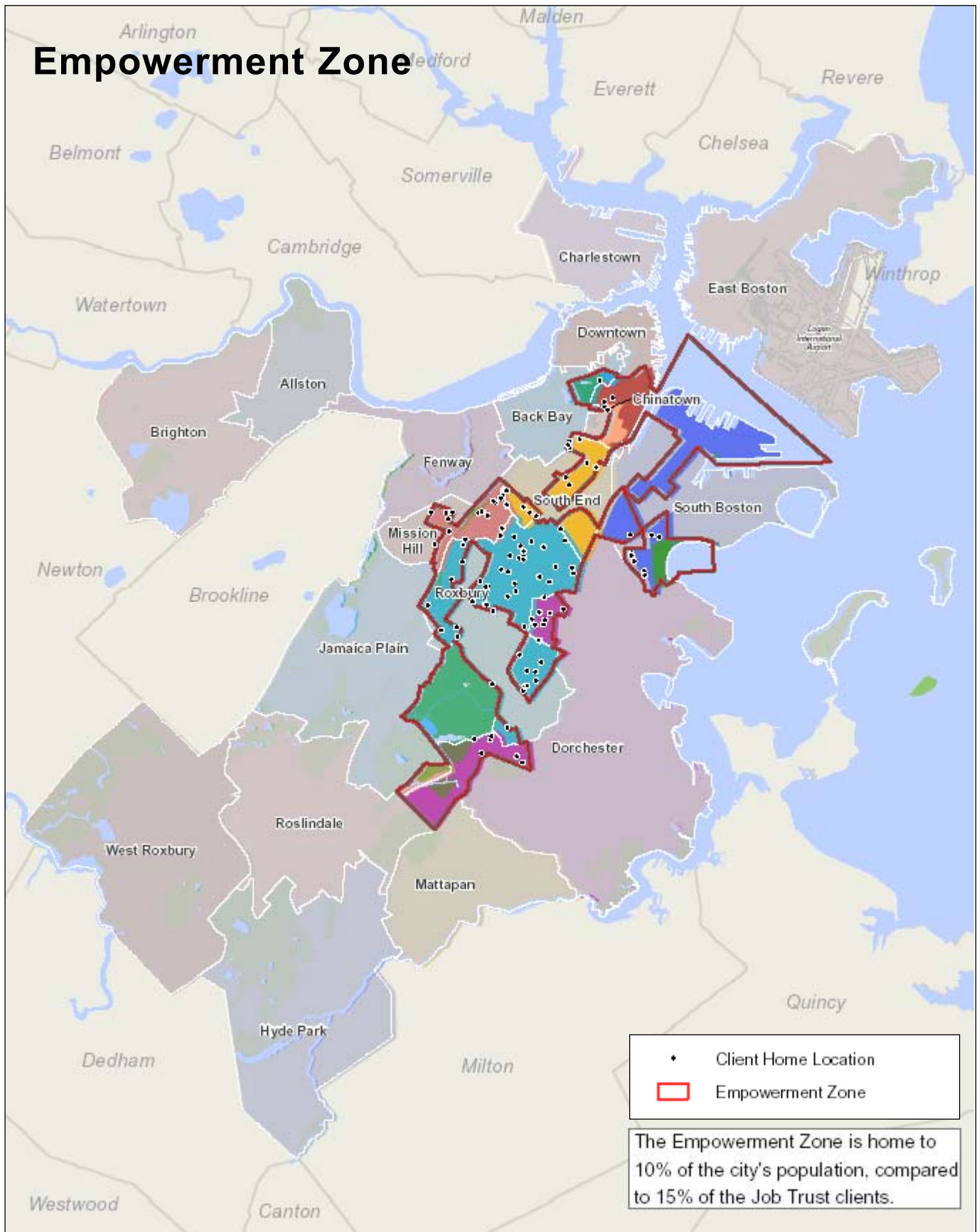
## OTHER PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Approximately 12% of the participants were recipients of welfare cash benefits in the form of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Another 12% received Food Stamps without cash benefits. About thirty percent of the group was employed in low wage or part-time positions at the time of enrollment. Fifteen percent resided in Boston's federally-designated "Empowerment Zone" which includes parts of Roxbury, South End, Chinatown, South Boston and Dorchester. The Empowerment Zone is made up of 28 low-income census tracts comprising 10% of the city's population.

Course preference varied little between native and non-native-English speakers, who were evenly enrolled in office support, allied health, computer networking, and culinary arts programs. The only exceptions were participants in the hospitality and pre-apprenticeship programs. The hospitality program targeted immigrants with limited English. Thus, by design, no native English speakers participated. Native English speakers comprised 94% of the pre-apprenticeship program. The program requirement for strong math and verbal skills may explain predominance of native English speakers in this program. Men showed the most interest in culinary arts, hospitality and computer networking. The pre-apprenticeship program was not an option for men.



# Empowerment Zone





# RESULTS

“ Women In The Building Trades is able to conduct outreach and preparation in a way small businesses can't, and to funnel women into the trades in a way that's useful to both the business and the individual woman. Traditionally, companies have cut themselves off from 50% of the potential pool of workers. We can't do that anymore. ”

Paul Edrenkamp, Byggmeister Association

## EMPLOYMENT

As can be seen in the chart on page 2, the “First Step” initiative was conceived at a time when the Boston and Massachusetts economy were still enjoying a very low rate of unemployment; by the time the first trainees were graduating in November 2001, the rate had jumped to 3.9%. Over the next 10 months as subsequent classes joined the hunt for jobs, the employment picture worsened; by September 2002 the unemployment rate stood at 5.2%.

To date, out of the 689 “First Step” participants (not including the 93 Health and Research Institute incumbent workers see sidebar) 439 have either found new higher wage jobs or received wage upgrades. Training programs for sectors hard hit by the recession, such as financial services and computer networking, not surprisingly had low placement rates. However, other training programs did quite well, and in fact, some exceeded their goals. Placement activities continue at several programs.



## WAGES AND BENEFITS

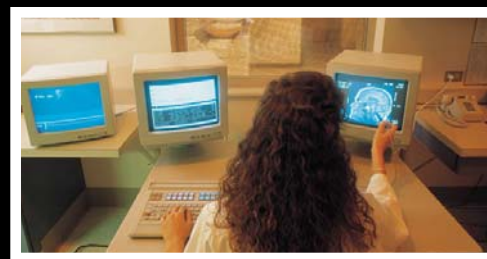
The average wage was \$11.08, which is above Boston's Living Wage of \$10.96 for Fiscal Year 2004. Wages ranged from a low of \$6.75 (State minimum wage) to \$21.07. (See chart x.) Average wages within training sectors varied. Hospitality and culinary arts were on the lower end (\$9.39 and \$9.99 respectively), office support in the middle (\$11.37, with \$11.70 for medical billers), and allied health and pre-apprenticeship in the building trades on the higher end (\$11.87 and \$13.31 respectively). Some of the allied health participants were already employed in this sector and received a wage upgrade.

The average wage differed between native and non-native English speakers. The average wage for native English speakers was \$11.78, while the average wage for non-native-English speakers was \$10.47. However, the placement rate for non-native-English speakers was slightly higher than that for native English speakers.

At least two thirds of the jobs had medical benefits attached. In the present economy there is a growing trend toward temporary jobs and temporary-to-permanent jobs. While precise figures are not available for the NJT placements, the NJT outcomes reflected this pattern.







## **EMPLOYERS**

Over 225 employers hired Neighborhood Jobs Trust graduates.  
The following 22 employers placed four or more grads.

Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital  
Blue Cross Blue Shield  
Boston Medical Center  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Chartwell  
Children's Hospital  
Citizens Bank  
Dimock Community Health Center  
EMRG, Inc.  
Fleet Bank  
Fulfillment Plus  
Hancock Manor Nursing Home  
Keyspan  
Marriott  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
Nine Zero Hotel  
Northeastern University  
Partners Healthcare  
Sodexo USA  
St. Mary's Women and Children's Center  
Veterans Administration Hospital  
VinFen Corporation

## **Success Story: Marina B.**

Although Marina was happy she had a job, she knew it wasn't enough to support her family. Looking for a career offering possibilities for future advancement, this East Boston resident enrolled in the Medical Assistant Certificate program at Bunker Hill Community College.

After completing training, Marina landed her "dream job" at the Massachusetts General Hospital Gillette Cancer Center. She has her own desk, her own computer and her own cell phone, but more importantly, feels like a valued member of a health care delivery team.

Marina is extremely grateful for the opportunity the NJT grant gave her. She knows she has the skills to function effectively in a fast-paced medical environment.

Someday in the future Marina wants to pursue a degree, but for now she says she is completely happy.

# ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

## WORKING WITH COMMUNITY TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS

Boston is fortunate to have many qualified organizations that provide job skills training to people at all income and education levels. They are critical partners in the effort to enhance the city's workforce and connect residents with work opportunities and, indeed, the promise of America.

At a time when these training programs were facing a difficult economy, as well as cutbacks in federal funding programs, it is likely that this nearly \$3 million of Neighborhood Jobs Trust funds kept some of these Community Based Organizations afloat. While this was not the goal of the program, a holistic perspective on workforce development and its relationship to economic development, clearly shows the value of continued viability of these training organizations, which underpin Boston's workforce training infrastructure.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMS

### *PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT IMPROVES TRAINING RESULTS*

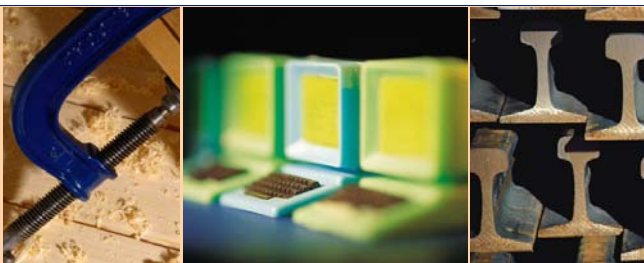
The Neighborhood Jobs Trust's goal in this initiative was to provide services for the hardest-to-serve training recipients. For these participants, the peer-to-peer support taking place in group training situations was instrumental to their success. Going through training with people facing similar barriers, such as lack of educational credential, low income, and limited English, enabled participants to rely on each other - for learning and for moral support. Neighborhood Jobs Trust graduates repeatedly cited peer-to-peer support as key to their success.

### *INTEGRATING SKILLS WITH EDUCATION AND OFFERING FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES INCREASED PARTICIPATION AMONG IMMIGRANTS AND THE UNDER-EMPLOYED*

Data from the "First Step" initiative shows an unusually high percentage of participants were immigrants. This reflects the RFP's call for training programs to integrate skills and education, such as combining English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) curriculum with an industry-specific training. The high percentage of immigrants is an important benchmark, since Boston's population growth today comes from newly-arriving immigrants. It is essential these workers are equipped with skills enabling them to contribute to the economy while taking steps toward realizing their life goals. Also, the RFP made it clear JCS would value programs serving the working poor by providing flexible training schedules. As noted earlier, nearly thirty percent (30%) of the NJT participants were among the working poor at the time they enrolled in training.

### *PARTNERING WITH EMPLOYERS INCREASES THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB PLACEMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT*

Programs with strong employer relationships had the best job placement rates. These programs involved employers in activities such as curriculum development, classroom teaching, internship opportunities for participants, and membership on advisory boards. Many of these employers were committed not only to hiring entry-level employees, but also to providing career ladders to help retain their staff.



Through "First Step", **781 Bostonians** acquired state-of-the-industry training allowing them to compete well for quality jobs and become productive members of the region's workforce. The results of the initiative **BENEFITED OVER 225 EMPLOYERS** by providing them with well-trained, eager employees. The skills training initiative undertaken with **\$3 MILLION IN NEIGHBORHOOD JOBS TRUST FUNDS** actualizes one of the primary rationales for creating and maintaining the Trust: it has increased the employment potential of Boston residents.

The "First Step" Neighborhood Jobs Trust program has provided a generous return on investment. The **AVERAGE COST PER ENROLLEE, \$3,800**, is economical compared to other skills training programs of similar quality. Given the fact the first graduates of training entered the job market just as the city's unemployment rate was rocketing upward, placements into quality jobs occurred at a commendable rate.

Beyond these cost efficiency and effectiveness "bottom lines", as both the data and the individual stories detailed here make clear, graduates of training not only accessed good jobs, but, equipped with their newly-gained skills many of them realized long-held career goals. In addition, for numerous trainees, their new employment allowed them to move from the "First Step" of training to a work environment where they could access career ladders, enabling them to improve both their skills and incomes with support from their new employers.

In all, the results of the "First Step" initiative make it a win-win undertaking. It has resulted in wins for both Boston residents and Boston employers. It has carried out Mayor Menino's commitment to improving the employment prospects of Boston's unemployed and underemployed residents. In helping fulfill one of the goals of the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, it has been a resounding win for the Trust, administered on behalf of Boston's citizens.

While the "First Step" project has more than proven its worth and made a significant contribution to the development of the city's workforce, it has not eliminated the needs of either employers or unemployed and underemployed residents. The economic downturn that bore down on the city during the initial training cycle has not run its full course. While the initial signs of an upturn are visible, the city's rate of unemployment as of May 2004 is still double what it was when Mayor Menino made his initial announcement of the program in January 2001. At the same time, employers report a continuing need for skilled, well-trained employees. Progress has been made; lessons have been learned. "Next Steps" are in order.



## Success Story: Marvin C.

Marvin came to Boston from El Salvador in 1995 as a young teenager. His first job was working with his brother at a restaurant where the work was hard, but the fast pace was enjoyable.

As Marvin entered his twenties, he knew he needed formal training to advance beyond the lower levels of kitchen work. In his Hyde Park neighborhood, Marvin heard about a Culinary Arts training program at Madison Park High School run by Jewish Vocational Service - the perfect opportunity to acquire formal instruction in all aspects of restaurant work - and the road he needed to take to achieve his goal of becoming a chef.

During his training, Marvin was never late, never absent, and never missed completing any homework assignment, even though he was working over 30 hours at a neighborhood restaurant. Marvin's skills were so outstanding the head pastry chef at Madison Park didn't hesitate to refer him to the Head Chef at Mistral, one of "Boston's Best" restaurants.

Marvin is still working for Mistral, and spends his free time writing music, playing the guitar, and, of course, cooking.

# CONCLUSIONS

Through “First Step”, **781 Bostonians** acquired state-of-the-industry training allowing them to compete well for quality jobs and become productive members of the region's workforce. The results of the initiative **BENEFITED OVER 225 EMPLOYERS** by providing them with well-trained, eager employees. The skills training initiative undertaken with **\$3 MILLION IN NEIGHBORHOOD JOBS TRUST FUNDS** actualizes one of the primary rationales for creating and maintaining the Trust: it has increased the employment potential of Boston residents.

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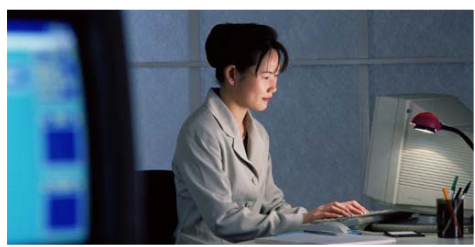






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## CITY OF BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD JOBS TRUST

ADMINISTERED BY

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF JOBS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR

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